

# The Journal



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## Quarry support increasing

### Jefferson County Commission expected to decide today on project

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CHARLES TOWN — More than 500 Jefferson County residents have signed a petition supporting the Old Standard Quarry commercial development, urging the County Commission to vote in favor of the project's rezoning request during today's meeting.

Rezoning would allow commercial uses on the former quarry site, which is on about 411 acres south of U.S. 340 along Millville Road. The County Commission argued last week about whether the much-debated issue needed more time for discussion, but the board decided 3-2 to

place the vote on today's regular meeting agenda. Commissioners Frances Morgan, Rusty Morgan and Jim Surkamp wanted to vote today, while commissioners Dale Manuel and Greg Corliss wanted to continue gathering more information.

The meeting begins at 9:30 a.m. today in the Courthouse, although commissioners could possibly move to the lower level of the Old Charles Town Library if a large crowd shows up for the decision, as expected.

Project developers, including Herb Jonkers and Gene Capriotti, plan to build a \$250 million to \$300 million hotel and upscale office buildings on the old quarry site if their rezoning petition is approved.

The County Commission has been pulled in many directions during recent weeks, as people who oppose the project and those who support it have spoken out several times.

Last week, the county received more than 540 form letters from people throughout the region, mainly from outside the state, who asked the board to reject the rezoning petition. Harpers Ferry and Bolivar town council members and community leaders have also urged the County Commission to vote against the commercial zoning, as well as leaders from Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

See **QUARRY A2**



Journal file photo by Beth Henry

**Commissioners Frances Morgan and Rusty Morgan tour the Old Standard Quarry site recently.**

# Quarry

FROM PAGE A1

7/19/07 The Journal

The Jefferson County Planning Commission also recommended denying the rezoning petition, saying it is not compatible with the county's comprehensive plan.

Project opponents have said they are worried about increased traffic congestion along U.S. 340, as well as the effect the commercial buildings could have on the view from nearby park property and historic Civil War sites.

Meanwhile, those who support the project say Jefferson County desperately needs the projected 6,000 new jobs and \$4.4 million in tax revenues that could be generated if the commercial plans are approved.

The list of supporters is growing; Delegate Bob Tabb, D-Jefferson, the Jefferson County Economic Development Authority and the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors have all said they would like the County Commission to approve the project.

Plus, Jonkers said about 530 people have signed a petition supporting the quarry project, which was submitted to the County Commission office this week.

"They're all local people, local voters," he said of the people who signed the petition, compared to "the out-of-state, fax machine form letters" which were sent to the County Commission last week.

Jonkers said the people who signed the petition are interested in creating economic opportunities, "as opposed to special interest groups who are trying to push their will on county government."

In addition to the county residents in favor of the commercial project, Jonkers said he received support from Gov. Joe Manchin.

Manchin sent Rob Alsop, secretary of the Department of Revenue, and Commerce Secretary Kelley Goes to the County Commission on June 28, to let the board know how important the quarry project would be for economic development in the Eastern Panhandle.

Jonkers said a representative from the state

Department of Natural Resources sent a letter to the County Commission this week, supporting the development plans and saying the project would not harm the area's wildlife.

If the project gains approval, the developers would clean up mountains of limestone debris and dilapidated buildings that are left over from the old quarry, which was active from the 1880s through 1974. Part of the property was also once the site of the county's old landfill, which closed in 1962.

The property is currently zoned for rural and high-density residential uses, and more than 1,600 residential units could be built there if the commercial project is not allowed.

Corliss said that is a major concern for him — he'd much rather see the county benefit from jobs and a stronger tax base than more homes.

He said he understands that Bolivar and Harpers Ferry leaders are concerned about traffic on the area's roads, but "they'd be a lot more hurt by 1,600 homes going in than commercial development." Corliss pointed out that the County Commission needs to focus on what is best for the entire county, not one area in particular.

Corliss also said he wasn't sure what to expect during today's meeting, but he has noticed more people coming out in favor of the commercial project.

"I think there's a lot more support being reflected," he said.

Frances Morgan has not specifically said whether she will vote for or against the petition to rezone, although she has implied during past meetings that she is not in favor of it. Corliss and Manuel support the commercial project, while Rusty Morgan and Surkamp said last week that they don't think the commercial development would be good in that part of the county.

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